



The International
Atari Newsletter

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February 1990

Vol. II No. 2

ATARI at Winter CES

by John Nagy

The LYNX found it to be an uphill battle at the Winter 1990 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas January 6 through 9, but it was more a matter of being outnumbered than outranked. While the Nintendo portable GAMEBOYS were everywhere in the massive multi-convention center showing of the latest in electronic offerings for the consumer marketplace, the little black-and-white (not even backlit!) LCD screen pales next to the dramatic Atari LYNX illuminated full color screen.

Atari had not planned to have a booth on the main floor of the CES show... but ended up with one anyway. EPYX (makers of Atari's LYNX) had paid for a 20' booth in the West main hall before they closed their software sales division, and it was an opportunity to draw attention to the LYNX and Atari. A last minute display was assembled, featuring a pair of lovely bikini-clad girls on roller skates, with a small sailboat as a background. They showed the LYNX and invited show goers to come to the "real" Atari display in the Mirage Hotel. The concept was to "capture a moment" from the CALIFORNIA GAMES cart that is shipped with all LYNX game machines. Beach babes on wheels present your scores at the end of that game.

Atari held a Suite in the Mirage Hotel where they displayed the "consumer" products in their lineup. These days, that means the GAME CONSOLES, all the way down to the old 2600, and up through the LYNX. Also "big" was the Portfolio (no surprise there!) Visitors enjoyed plenty of munchies and perhaps the finest press information kits yet to be offered by Atari, offered by well informed attendants.

The "ATARI POWER PACK", a 520STFM bundled with a stack of software at a very attractive price (under \$400) was shown. If made available, it will include Music Studio, Neochrome, Planetarium, maps and Legends, Star Raiders, Missile Command, Alien Brigade, and F15. Still undecided is whether to include the Timeworks set of Word Writer, Swiftcalc, and Data Manager, to be licensed as Atari products, or to go with the combination of other applications like First Word Plus, Phasar, and Informer II.

Research was done for Atari by the marketing powerhouse Chiat-Day to determine what a computer buyer really wanted and needed in the way of software. Surprising no one, they found that most want a word processor, a spreadsheet, and a database, plus some games. In the POWER PACK, Atari hopes to meet all the immediate startup needs of the first-time computer buyer, and provide a satisfying

base of software to build on. Some sort of tutorial disk or video tape is also to be included to let the new user get started more easily. At or below \$400, this set looks mighty attractive.

You may be asking, "A 520STFM? Why not the STE? Isn't there a similar bundle being sold in Europe that includes the new machine?" Yes, there is. But the STE is still not passed by the FCC for sale in the United States, and the price of the STE alone is expected to be significantly higher than the Power Pack. Now the question at ATARI is "do we have enough 520's?" Several lines have been scarce lately, and Atari may have to postpone the Power Pack promotion until stocks are higher, or to rethink it to include the STE later in the spring.

This CES followed the pattern that has been developing across the last years - computers are "out" at the consumer level. Games, well, maybe, but PHONES, FAXes, and WATCHES are the big thing again. Among the few software houses displaying goods: Electronic Arts (mostly their consignment house titles), TENGENT (showing lots of NINTENDO titles with the rest), and MICROPROSE. AMIGA (Commodore) WAS on the main floor, but according to observers, they had a small, poorly attended booth along a wall "in the cheap area"...

The point of CES is to SELL manufacturers supplies to distributors and dealers. The Portfolio and LYNX have been selling themselves... with sales outstripping production to date. The added exposure at CES can only add to the dramatic demand already in place for the machines.

By the way, Atari is expected to make a MUCH bigger appearance at the National Association of Music Merchandisers show... which will be going on just after we must send this issue on its way. Features included introduction of a MIDI-TASKING system, actually a multi-task environment that should be of particular interest to musicians. Atari will cap the Saturday of the show with a reunion concert with Eric Clapton and the old super group CREAM. This NAMM show may well serve to push ATARI over the top in musician respect and use. Long a popular choice for music makers, the new products from Atari are now providing an affordable and unique answer for live and studio music use. Among the satisfied new customers: Michael Jackson, who visited COMDEX where he was photographed with Atari equipment. Look for more on NAMM next month in Z*Net!

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BRAND NEW ITEMS

\$19995 The "BLACK BOX"![©] \$19995

The **Black Box** is a device for your XL or 130XE computer that adds tremendous power to your 8-bit Atari. It has two buttons, two switches, and a set of dip switches visible from the outside. It plugs directly into the back of the 800XL, 800XL, and 130XE computers. Custom cases may be an optional expense. The **Black Box** performs three main tasks: interface to a SASI/SCSI bus device (hard disks), Parallel printer port, and a RS232 port. A fourth option, available soon, will be a floppy disk port, especially useful to XF-551 owners. The SASI/SCSI port provides the necessary signals for hooking up most common hard disks. You may partition your hard disk into as many drives as you wish; up to 9 can be accessed at a time. By pressing one of the buttons on the **Black Box**, you will enter the configuration menu, where you can re-assign drive numbers, etc. When you exit, you will be right back in the program you were running when the switch was pressed. Each hard disk can be write-protected. The Parallel Printer port will allow you to hook up any printer that uses the standard Centronics interface. As an option, you can use the computer's extra memory as a printer buffer, or order the **Black Box** with 64K of on-board RAM. You may assign printer number and line-feed options within the menu (for use with multiple printers). Another amazing feature of the **Black Box** is the built-in screen dump. By pressing a button (on the box), the contents of your screen will be dumped to your printer (you can define text or graphics modes with a switch!). The RS232 port supplies the full RS232C spec signals for connection to a modem, or another machine (for null-modem). The handler for the **Black Box**'s modem port is built-in and takes up NO memory! The port handles rates up to 19.2K BAUD! A future upgrade for the **Black Box** is a floppy disk interface board. This will allow the addition of up to four 5.25" or 3.5" mixtures of floppy drives to be used with the system. The drives will act like standard single/enhanced/double density disk drives, but MUCH faster! All drives will be Super Archiver compatible, and support up to 2 sides of 80 tracks. Acting with this hardware upgrade will come software capable of reading, writing, and formatting disks in IBM's MS-DOS format and the Atari ST format, and allow you to transfer files between those disk formats and the Atari's format. In addition, a machine language monitor has been added to allow memory disassembly, memory/register changes, and more. The Price of the **Black Box** is \$199.95 for the basic unit and \$249.95 with 64K of RAM (for printer spooler) plus \$8 for S/H/I. An optional custom **BLACK BOX** case is available for \$39.95 extra.

\$19995 The "MULTIPLEXER"![©] \$19995

This device brings the power and flexibility of larger systems to your 8-bit. The **Multiplexer** is a device (actually a collection of modules) that allow up to 8 Ataris to read and write to the same drive (typically a hard disk), printer, and talk to each other. One "master" computer (any 8-bit) is equipped with the master **Multiplexer** interface. Then up to 8 "slave" computers can hook up to the master, each having their own slave interface. The "common" peripherals (things that are to be shared) are connected to the master computer. On each slave, all disk and printer I/O is routed through the master, so no drives are needed on them. The master computer can be configured in any manner you wish - you can for example have certain peripherals "local" to the slave, or routed to a different number on the master. Under development is a BBS system that will make full use of this device, allowing up to 8 lines/users to be using the system at the same time! A mutuser chat mode is a feature of this program, however, you do not NEED this program to run a BBS with the **Multiplexer** (but be warned that not all BBS programs will run concurrently). All slaves are independent, and do not need to have the same program running on them. This system is excellent for BBS SysOps, because you can be using your hard disk(s) while still running your BBS uninterrupted! Another example is in a classroom situation, or anywhere a disk needs to be shared by different people. This is an EXCELLENT programming/debugging tool as well! The **Multiplexer** price is \$199.95 for a master and two slave units (plus \$5 S/H/I). Additional slave units are \$69.95 each.

\$2995 "XF551 ENHANCER"![©] \$2995

The XF551 Atari drive is a fine product with one major flaw...it writes to side TWO of your floppy disks BACKWARDS. This causes read/write incompatibility problems with all other single sided drives made for Atari such as Indus, Trak, Rana, Percom, Astra, Atari 1050, Atari 810, etc. Add the **XF551 ENHANCER** to the new XF551 drive and your problems are over! This device will restore 100% compatibility while retaining original design qualities of Atari's super new drive. The **XF551 ENHANCER** is a MUST for all XF551 Owners. Installation is simple. Only \$29.95 plus \$4 S/H/I.

\$9995 The "POWER PLUS"![©] MEMORY UPGRADE \$9995 (for 800XL's and 130XE's only)

C.S.S. has made the "Power Plus" memory upgrades available on an "unadvertised" basis to our regular patrons. These upgrades have become so popular we are now making them available to everyone! For those of you unfamiliar with "Power Plus" upgrade, it is the most COMPATIBLE upgrade available for the 800XL or 130XE. All other upgrade kits have some degree of INCOMPATIBILITY with certain software programs. C.S.S. studied this problem and developed the **POWER PLUS** upgrade which, to the best of our knowledge, appears to be 100% compatible. To upgrade a 130XE to 320K is only \$99.95. To upgrade an 800XL to 320K is only \$149.95 (circuitry from a 130XE is actually transplanted into the 800XL). Add \$5 for S/H/I. C.S.S. will install these upgrades for only \$20 if you wish.

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For product information, WEEKLY SPECIALS, informative discussions on new products, theories, products you'd like to see developed, and used items for sale or trade, CALL (716) 247-7157 24 hrs. This BBS also features multi-user "CHAT" capabilities thanks to our new MULTIPLEXER![©] which allows multiple user and BBS boards to be linked so several callers can share boards or talk to each other simultaneously! CALL (716) 247-7157 for BBS only. For VOICE orders or repairs, please call our normal Hot Line number (716) 586-5545.

BEST SELLERS

\$6995 The "SUPER ARCHIVER"![©] \$6995

The new **SUPER ARCHIVER** obsoletes all copying devices currently available for the **ATARI 1050!** It eliminates the need for Patches, PDB files, Computer Hardware, etc. Copies are exact duplicates of originals and will run on any drive, without exaggeration, the **SUPER ARCHIVER** is the most powerful PROGRAMMING/COPYING device available for the 1050! Installation consists of a plug-in chip and 6 simple solder connections. Software included. Features are:

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- SIMPLE INSTALLATION

The **SUPER ARCHIVER** is so POWERFUL that only programs we know that can't be copied are the newer ELECTRONIC ARTS and SYNFILE/SYNCALC (34 FULL sectors/track). If you want it ALL...buy the "BIT-WRITER"![©] also... then you'll be able to copy even these programs! Only \$69.95 plus \$5 S/H/I.

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\$3995 The "QUINTOPUS"![©] \$3995

The "QUINTOPUS"![©] is an inexpensive device that provides a tremendous amount of convenience while eliminating the problems associated with the endless "daisy-chaining" of peripherals (eg. drives, interfaces, printers, modems, cassettes, etc.). The "QUINTOPUS"![©] is an I/O port expander that converts a single I/O output/input into five additional outputs/inputs. Instead of daisy-chaining all your peripherals (which often times results in passing a signal through 30 feet or more of cable), the "QUINTOPUS"![©] allows each device to be connected directly to the computers through only three or four feet of cable. This is particularly useful when attempting to use ULTRASPEED or WARPSPEED data transfer rates. The "QUINTOPUS"![©] also provides the "extra" I/O ports often needed to connect devices not having daisy-chaining capabilities. Cable resistance and capacitance are greatly reduced thereby significantly improving the opportunity of accurate data transfers! Only \$39.95 plus \$5 S/H/I. SIO cable is \$5 extra if needed.

\$5995 The "QUINTOPUS"![©] \$5995 (with SWITCHABLE PORTS!)

This Deluxe version of the "QUINTOPUS"![©] has all of the above features with the additional benefits of two SWITCHABLE PORTS! This means you can connect two computers to one printer or two printers to one computer; you can switch in a computer/printer combination and while you're printing out a long document, switch in a second computer to access a modem, disk drive, cassette deck, etc! Switch multiple combinations of peripherals or computers without the hassle or re-arranging I/O cables...simply flip a switch! Only \$59.95 plus \$5 S/H/I. SIO cable is \$5 extra if needed.

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These specials are available on a first come first served basis. Pre-owned items are in exceptionally clean condition and are in perfect operating order. All items are warranted. Sorry...no rainchecks. Order 5 or more items and we'll pay the freight. These SPECIALS are for C.S.S. customers only - NO DEALER DISCOUNTS! Add \$5 to order for S/H/I.

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5. DISKCRACKER (Newest version)	\$ 50	\$ 19
6. ELECTRONIC PHANTOM SECTOR MAKER DELUXE	\$ 60	\$ 35
7. IMPOSSIBLE for 800 or 800XL	\$ 150	\$ 69
8. KLONE II (Generic HAPPY Backup)	\$ 100	\$ 75
9. SILENCER	\$ 30	\$ 19
10. BLACK PATCH (MASTER)	\$ 50	\$ 25

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For 24-48 hour repair service on Atari computers or drives, call our repair department at (716) 586-5545 day or night. All work is guaranteed, NO minimum estimate fees; if you have two or more items for repair and don't want to spend any money... send them to us and we'll use the parts from both defective items to make one good working unit at NO CHARGE... we'll keep the other defective item for parts!



Z*Net Newswire...



⇒ All 16 Federated Electronics Superstores in Houston and Dallas are being closed and their stock liquidated, a Utah liquidation firm has said. Western Liquidators from Salt Lake City have purchased the stores' inventory, and has seemingly known about the closings for a few months.

⇒ Although it is older news, occurring mid 1989, Playboy Magazine mentioned in a very recent column that "FEDERATED" of California was going to pay 12 MILLION dollars in a settlement to over 8,000 employees and applicants who were forced to take a polygraph test before employment. This is, indeed "our" Atari FEDERATED stores. The lie-detector tests are illegal under California law and Federal rights to privacy, and Atari/Federated will have to pay. However, the wrongdoing was by the former owners of the ill-fated electronics store chain, and so the settlement will be just another part of the ongoing suit by Atari against the former owners. Atari says that the chain's value was seriously overstated in the material supporting the purchase, and that items like this settlement were not disclosed. The former owners of Federated are expected to be quite "collectable" when the suit is finally settled or tried, making the Federated adventure less painful than it might otherwise be.

⇒ QUICK ST Version 1.8 has been released commercially by Darek Mihocka's BRANCH ALWAYS SOFTWARE. It is faster than ever now, speeding up screen writes dramatically. QUICK ST now matches or surpasses TURBO ST in most categories, plus it installs as an AUTO program, using 20K (less than 1/2 of Turbo ST) and does not take up an accessory slot. The Quick ST disk includes the Quick Index benchmarking software to test software and hardware accelerators. It also includes the Quick View file reading utility. Quick ST 1.8 costs \$19.95 US. Branch Always Software, Box 2624, Station B, Kitchener, Ontario CANADA N2H 6N2, (519) 570-4340.

⇒ GOE UPDATE: A reader informs us that he received a refund for his long overdue prepaid order for David Sullivan's Graphic Operating Environment cart for the 8-bit Atari. "On December 11, 1988, I ordered the GOE cartridge from Sullivan for \$50.00 (a special early offering). About the same time, I spoke to Sullivan via phone and he informed me the cartridges would

be available in the near future. I attempted to contact Sullivan twice in February... I wrote him a letter March 4... I sent Sullivan a certified, return receipt requested letter on June 5, 1989, demanding status or a refund. I got the letter receipt back, but no other response... On June 26, I reported this matter to the US Postal Inspectors through the local Post Office as a matter of possible mail fraud. The Postal Service was able to contact Sullivan at his new phone number (619) 275-6690, same address as before. Sullivan said he was having problems with the start-up disk for GOE, which was the cause of the delay. At my insistence, he said he would refund my money. A month later, I reported to the Postal Inspectors that I still had not received my refund... in late August, I finally received a refund check. I suggest that anyone still having a problem with Sullivan, report the matter to the US Postal Inspectors through their local Post Office... of course, it is now highly unlikely GOE will materialize. Oh well, at least we have Alan Reeve's Diamond." -Pat Hayes

⇒ Z*NET ONLINE debuted in January with issue #501. The numbering change was suggested by a reader in late December who felt that the existing sequential system was confusing... Issue #238 (the actual issue number) says nothing about when the issue was released. 501 means this issue is Volume 5 (fifth year of production of ZMAGs), week 01. This system allows anyone to identify how old an issue is just by the filename.

⇒ Computer Software Service, a major midwest distributor of computer hardware and software of all brands, has gone out of business. Phones and FAX numbers are unanswered as some developers and dealers try to figure out what to do next. The Addison, Illinois company had many dealers depending on them alone, offering a wide base of products that prominently included Atari and Amiga. Inside reports claim that the company is filing bankruptcy although it was making some profit even at the end. Company owners apparently decided that they could make more money in other businesses. Remaining software distributors American and Pacific, Triangle, and Horizon will have to pick up the slack, and hopefully soon. Confusing many people is the COMPUTER SOFTWARE SERVICES company of Rochester, New York, a totally unrelated and major 8-

bit Atari hardware and software manufacturer and service center. CSS (New York) is STILL in business and doing better than ever with sales in 23 countries. CSS (Illinois) was a multi-brand distributor of software products to dealers across the midwest, and is OUT of business. CSS (NY)'s most recent success (among 38 products) is the BLACK BOX, an MIO-like device to provide interfaces to printer, modem, and hard drives for the 8-bit Atari computer. Repairs are also available for computers and disk drives. CSS, EO. Box 17660, Rochester NY 14817, (716) 586-5545.

⇒ MiniScribe, a well known disk drive manufacturer, filed a Federal bankruptcy petition on January 2. Miniscribe has taken this step because of a number of investor lawsuits it now faces. In September 1989, a report stated that former managers committed massive fraud over a three year period. Miniscribe will be phasing out its US manufactured products by the end of the first quarter of 1990.

⇒ WordPerfect recently announced that it will provide customer support around the clock. The company now has a staff available for customers who need help after normal work hours. About one-third of WPCorp's work force is assigned to customer support duties. Customers who need technical help after regular business hours may call the special support line at (801) 226-6444.

⇒ Reports of PCBITTO II say it has indeed begun to ship in January, but some users are not getting results. The large (said to be 5" x 7") circuit board is not fitting in some versions of the ST, and others are reporting trouble getting it to function. These are likely to be due to inadequate soldering of the CPU connections, but stay tuned to Z*Net for further reports.

⇒ TALON TECHNOLOGIES will shortly add its SUPERCHARGER IBM box to the list of emulators available for the Atari ST and MEGA computers. This one has a major difference: it is really an external computer, with its own CPU and memory that plugs into your DMA port. It also allows instant switching between IBM and ST modes. An expansion box allowing the use of real IBM type cards is planned. \$399. SuperCharger/Talon Technologies, 243 N. Hwy. 101, #11, Solano Beach, CA 92075.

Continued...



...Z*Net Newswire



⇒ Major Atari ST software and hardware maker MICHTRON of Michigan will be releasing the FAST FAX MODEM for the ST line in February. Also ready is the AMIGA version, and Tim Purves of Michtron is now finishing the ST software. To sell at \$699, the modem will allow all standard FAX sending and receiving, with the resulting intake file viewable on screen or printer. The FAST FAX was first shown last year at the April COMDEX in Chicago. It was expected that special interfacing in the software would enable full images of pages to be developed in FLEET STREET PUBLISHER and sent as FAXes without ever requiring local printing. This feature may be included either at first or a later upgrade. Meanwhile, FLEET STREET PUBLISHER V 3.0 is also only weeks away from release.

⇒ "Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego?", the newest program in Broderbund Software's award-winning Carmen Sandiego software series, was the best-selling disk-based entertainment software during the 1989 holiday season, according to software distributors and retailers nationwide. Since the introduction in August 1989, resellers have reported sales of more than 100,000 copies of the program.

⇒ A Maryland computer BBS operator has been sentenced to three years in prison for his part in a bombing incident last March. David Overeem, 18 years old, of Gaithersburg, Md. is said to have helped operate a BBS called "Pyromaniac Production Systems," which reportedly provided recipes for an array of explosive devices, including rockets, car bombs, pipe bombs, bottle bombs and land mines. Overeem pleaded guilty to making a pipe bomb that allegedly was detonated by a friend on March 26 outside a 17-year-old girl's home in a suburb of Washington, D.C. After Overeem's arrest, investigators found computer records in his bedroom showing that hundreds of people had access to the BBS. Among the callers were some of the four teen-agers killed Dec. 31, 1988, in the accidental explosion of a pipe bomb they were building in a Bethesda, Maryland, garage.

⇒ IBM has been sued by a Texas supplier of telecommunications network management software. The suit accuses IBM of unfair trade competition and deceptive advertising. The suit brought by Stonehouse & Co. of Dal-

las, asks a Texas state district court to enjoin IBM from interfering with Stonehouse's customer contracts and to declare IBM's new "best solution" ads are false and misleading.

⇒ On January 10, Atari User Group Coordinator Bob Brodie addressed a national full house in a GENie telecommunications service conference. Said Bob, "I have been at Atari for a little over four months now. This has been both an exciting, and an educational experience for me. Being a Southern Californian had me spoiled, and I did not even know it. We had several groups, and at least five dealers all within an hour's drive! And all the dealers carried the full line of Atari products. Needless to say, I have discovered that to be the exception, rather than the rule. So many of our users do not have access to a dealer of any type, that I'm of the opinion that getting more dealers, and better dealers is one of our greatest needs at Atari. But to really serve the users groups, I need your input. I need to know what things you need from Atari, and from me to make your groups better, more interesting, and to grow. I realize that the previous requirements for user group recognition were rather arbitrary. My thoughts are if you're a group, regardless of size, I want to try to support you! I do have hopes of developing some marketing plans for user groups. There is a strong possibility that some of those purchases will require minimum orders. Other than that, no special requirements! I just need to have the group name, acronym, address, a contact person, phone number(s), a bbs number, and a newsletter name (if you have those), and I would also appreciate an online address on a major online service, like GENie. Please remember to include your area code with your phone number, you'd be amazed how many people forget that!"

Bob continued, "If groups would like for me to visit them, they need to send me either e-mail, or a letter. It helps if the meeting can serve more than one group. Ideally, I'd like to visit the largest number of people possible in each trip. So please let me know how many people to expect. It helps me justify the trip, and not look like I'm just out visiting my relatives!!! With your help, and suggestions, we will have a brighter future. I also want to stress that I want to be as available as possible, and work to be an asset to your group. My office phone (408-745-2052) is on 24 hours

with an answering machine. Of course I am here on GENie (BOB-BRODIE) almost daily, and I can be FAXed at 408-754-2088!"

⇒ A new "modem tax" scare pinpointed the wrong agency in January. Rumors circulated that the FCC was again considering the measure defeated last year that could tack additional charges on phones with a modem attached. The facts now seem to be that the FCC is definitely NOT looking at this again, but that some local telephone companies are attempting to institute such charges on a state-by-state basis. Word to the wise: check your state's public service commission and congressmen's office to find if such things are brewing.

⇒ Gribnif Software announced that NeoDesk 2.05 has been designed to support the ST's "GEM Pipeline". This support allows for special "NeoDesk Accessories" to be written which can access many of the NeoDesk functions directly. Gribnif will be releasing new accessories both as public domain and as commercial products. The first of these is a PD "recoverable trashcan" (it allows files to be recovered after "deletion" using the new system), and a commercial command line interpreter will soon follow. A Neodesk Developer's Kit will be offered soon as well for programmers who want more information on making their own add-ons to the outstanding desktop alternative software. Gribnif Software, (413) 584-7887.

⇒ Robert J. Guadagno, founder of the Atari Users Association (A.U.A.) almost two years ago, has severed all ties with the group. Now run by the "Atari Elite" club, the AUA is a national user support group, intended to be a feedback and lobby group with Atari and developers. A major focus of the AUA had been to stop piracy. Severe criticism and lack of cooperation and volunteers made Guadagno offer the organization for other management in July, 1989. AUA Public Relations Officer Joseph Muha offered to take the group and manage it with his own user group, Atari Elite, but by the time the transfer occurred, Muha was no longer involved. Guadagno is disappointed that the "new" AUA has dropped 8-bit Atari support but directs interested parties to contact the new officers. AUA, C/O D.C. Signorini, RD#2 Box 278B, Canonsburg, PA 15317. ●

MEET THE DEVELOPERS – Kidprgs Come of Age

Written for Z*Net by D.A. Brumleve

[Editor's Note: In this new series of articles, Z*Net will bring be bringing you closer to the people who make our Atari products. We asked Dot to tell us about her experiences and influences in deciding to make the jump from an "amatuer" programmer to a commercial software publisher.]

My husband brought home our first Atari ST in 1985. Our oldest son (he was seven at the time but a super wiz at such things) quickly mastered the operating system and the few adult programs we had acquired. For almost a year, it was "Danny's" computer, and then Danny taught me to use the machine for word processing. My typewriter went into storage. I've always been a klutz when it came to drawing with a pen, but I found that my efforts in D.E.G.A.S. actually turned out as I intended. We got into Sundog and King's Quest II as a family. Clean dishes, tidy clothes, and spotless countertops dropped way down on my priority list.

Our younger children could not help but notice what fun we older folks were having with the computer. Two of my sons were excellent and prolific pen-and-ink artists, but they could not master D.E.G.A.S.' user-interface. Catherine, then a preschooler, wanted to try her hand at Music Studio and Deluxe Piano, but could not read (words or music), so this was only available to her if some kind parent would help her with the computer. All of the children wanted to use the games, but these required reading and/or higher-level thinking skills that were simply beyond their reach. So I looked around for commercial and public domain counterparts to the adult programs we were using. I looked for programs that would be of interest to the children and would be friendly enough for them to use alone. I found virtually none.

So I learned programming in 1987 with two central goals in mind. I wanted to create purposeful programs which would allow young children to use the Atari ST as a tool to help them do things they otherwise could not do as well or, perhaps, at all. And I wanted my programs to be simple enough to be used completely independently by children, with no adult help. Since that time, I have developed some two dozen "kidprgs" which are now freely distributed, and one commercial package, PreSchool KidProgs, which is published by MichIron.

Last year I found ST-LOG and ANALOG to be wonderful outlets for some of my shorter programs. I wrote a column and program each month, and the magazine permitted its disk programs to be freely distributed. Selling my programs to ST-Log also enabled me to earn enough money to improve my development systems and to attend Atari shows. Unfortunately, this income ended with the demise of ANALOG.

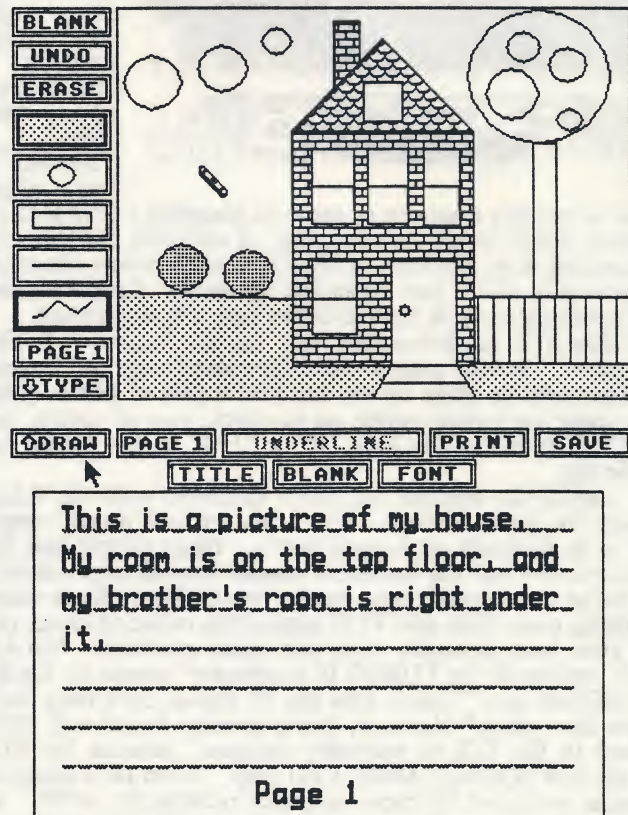
At the shows, I watched the CodeHead guys and "home-grown" developers with a certain amount of envy. They got to go to all these shows. They had their own booth. They published their own programs. They knew who their users were. They got feedback in the form of suggestions and complaints on a regular basis. They got to determine their own packaging, the design and layout of their manuals, the color of their disks, the quality of their products. They got to pay for exorbitant ads in ST publications. They were earning some money, even if not millions, and plenty of respect. They could personally experience all the fun and headaches of publishing. Yes, this was the way to go.

I asked friends in the business for advice, and many of them said "Don't even think it!" I have no qualms about discounting informed advice, so late last year I began to publish my kidprgs commercially under the "D.A. Brumleve" label. (It turns out that you don't have to pay for a trademark or copyright search if your company name is your own name.)

My first product in my own company is Kidpublisher Professional, a desktop publishing program for elementary-aged children. I am now completing are three additional programs: Kidpainter, which is also aimed at ages 5-11, and Super Kidkeys (music) and Super Kidgrid (graphics) for ages 3-7. Programs are not copy-protected and parents and teachers are encouraged, when needed, to make individual copies for each child in the home or school. Our packaging is professional but low-budget, and the price (\$25) is designed to attract folks who might otherwise forego commercial programs for the youngest members of their households. Documentation for the 5-11 age range includes both a child's manual and an instruction booklet for parents and teachers. Later this year, I hope to add a few more programs in each age range.

Though some of these programs include games, the primary purpose of each is one of self-expression, experimentation, and creation. We attempt to help children take full advantage of the computer's unique and remarkable editing ability. We seek to provide a consistent (and, for children, intuitive) user interface, both within a given program and between programs. I now have available several classes of local school-children to test my programs and offer suggestions for improvements of a user interface that children can readily use with little or no instruction. Our ultimate goal is to provide a complete package of sequenced programs in each of these age ranges, so that there is a developmentally-appropriate alternative to suit each child's needs, interests, and abilities in the home and classroom.

I guess now we're really software publishers, so watch us closely! Who knows? I may soon have a "D.A. Brumleve" Category on GENIE! ●



Screens from KIDPUBLISHER PROFESSIONAL by D.A. Brumleve

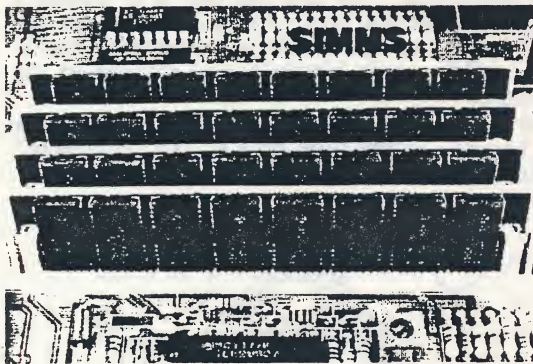
ATARI'S NEW STE - AN INSIDE LOOK

by John Nagy

I have seen the future of Atari ST computing... and so has most of the world. Unfortunately, the STE computer (E for "enhanced"), which will replace the 520STFM and 1040STFM altogether, is still not available in the USA. FCC testing is continuing and the latest revision is expected to pass in the coming 6 weeks. When it does pass, the STE will hopefully end the ST machine shortage that is frustrating many US dealers. Contrary to common speculation, Atari is NOT putting the US STE on "hold" in order to sell old stock 520 and 1040 machines - there aren't many of them left. When available, the one-meg STE may be at or below current 1040STFM prices, and offer more features. In Canada, the 1040STE retails at \$900 (US equivalent) but sells for as little as \$560 in US dollars. That's without monitor, of course.

Through reports from European magazines, Canadian users, Atari tech reports, and my own hands-on experience, we can give you this look ahead on what to expect from the STE, inside and out.

The STE will come in at least three flavors... with 1, 2, and 4 meg or RAM. I had the opportunity to see and use



several versions including the "4160STE" four meg unit. The most welcome feature to many will be the single-in-line memory modules ("SIMMS") that allow

users to increase memory as easily as plugging a card into an existing socket inside the computer. A complete disassembly appears not to be required, as the RAM cards have a separately removable shield just under the top panel. Keep in mind that the shield may be revised before the FCC is satisfied.

The STE machines look just like the "current" STFM machines. The sole clues to the differences inside are the pair of extra joystick jacks on the left side, a pair of phono jacks just under the power switch on the back, and of course, the little "E" instead of the little "F" or "FM" on the model tag on the top.

Inside, the changes are more apparent, with the RAM sockets the most obvious. The keyboard and power supply look to be basically unchanged (sorry... many people hate the keyboard feel and the underside mouse/joystick connectors!), but below it is a totally new motherboard. Many fewer chips are being used, with new VLSI superchips reducing costs, power draw, heat, assembly time, and repair problems. Jim Allen Jr., maker of the TURBO 16 accelerator boards for the ST and MEGAs says "This is how the ST should have been built in the first place." However, Jim's speedup board will NOT operate in the STE as currently designed, because the STE has the new SQUARE 68000 CPU chip. Turbo 16 is designed to solder on top of the more common rectangular 68000. Be assured, Jim is working on alternatives. Similar problems face other internal upgrade manufacturers (PCDITTO II, PC-SPEED, etc.)

A pleasant sight on the new STE board is a BLITTER chip. These never made it to the ST series, but MEGA users have enjoyed the screen speed increases of this chip for some time. The TOS in use is version 1.6, which gives the features of 1.4 PLUS new possibilities. Also, the STE has an RF Modulator and composite video output. Although present on late model 1040ST's the ability to run a TV as a monitor is a welcome feature. Output is at least as good as the older units, and perhaps a bit cleaner.

New features and capabilities include:

- * Digital 8-bit sampled pulse-code stereo audio output. Feeding out the two jacks in the rear, the new sound is dramatic. Music programmed for this feature sounds as good as most low-mid synthesizers, with full orchestration possible. The sound is DMA controlled so it uses no CPU time, allowing complex sound and complex video without interaction.

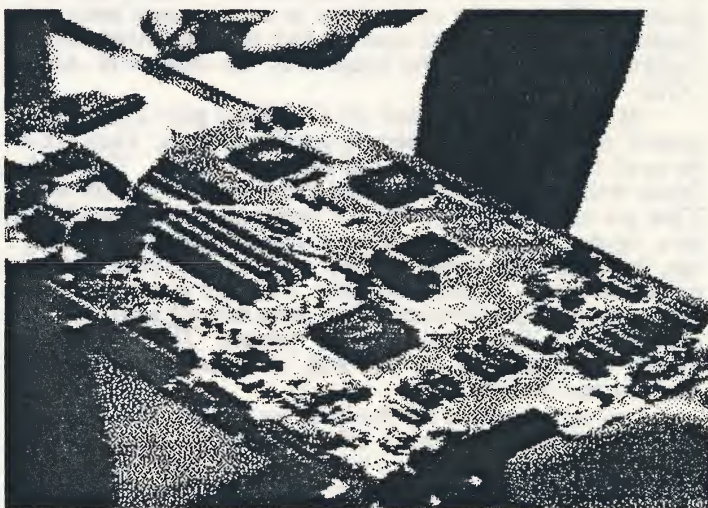
- * Two extra joystick/lightgun/paddle/etc. jacks. The 15

pin connectors can each accommodate three control devices, allowing up to EIGHT simultaneous players on games designed to use them and the "old" joysticks... more, if someone uses the keyboard too.

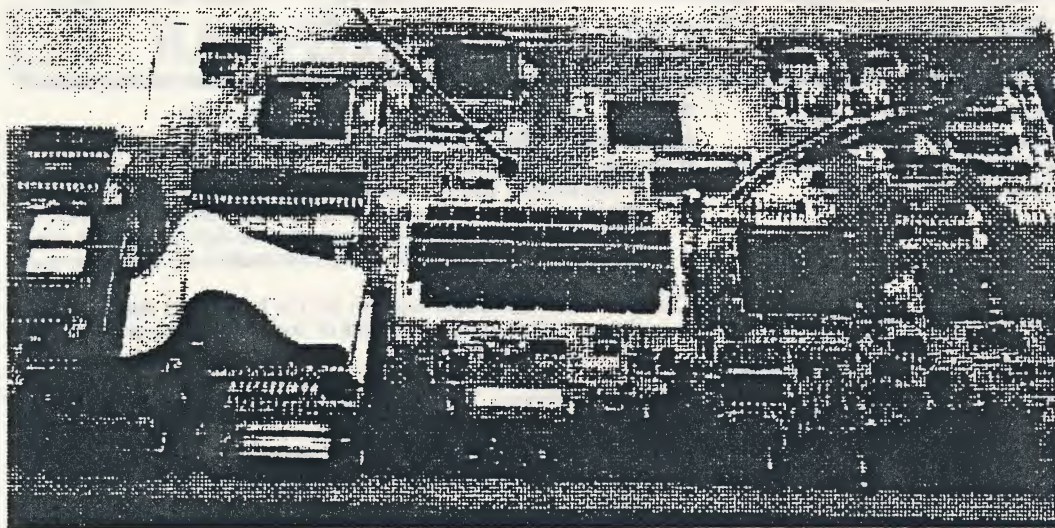


15-PIN CONTROL PORTS

- * 4,096 colors available. Although the color resolution and number of colors at once remains the same as on the ST series (4 in medium, 16 in low resolution), the STE has 16 levels of each "pure" color (red, green, blue) instead of just 8. Thus, 16 shades of exactly the same color can be generated, a dramatic visual improvement. Through fast palette shifting, graphics can appear much more varied and vibrant, and gradients can be much softer. Games can look a lot better. It has



STE MOTHERBOARD



STE MOTHERBOARD

been suggested that SPECTRUM can and should be revised to display 4,096 colors at once, which will make for incredible pictures!

* **Hardware screen scrolling and control.** Fans of the 8-bit Atari remember the ease of use of graphics modes that allowed "display lists" and instant screen scroll. Well, it's back on the STE! It can do fast scrolls in any direction without cpu-hungry memory moves.

* **TOS 1.6.** It appears to be almost completely compatible with TOS 1.4, allowing "old style" sound and color schemes to run as expected, but timings show it to be up to 10% faster in screen drawing. However, it takes a larger memory block now, up to 256K from the old 192K. An unexpected plus appears to be a pre-planned compatibility with 68030 CPU chips. Could a "030" TT-like upgrade be possible in the future? If so, computing speed could be increased many-fold but hardware TT features probably cannot be added.

* **User memory upgradable to 16 MEG.** Using (expensive!) 4-bit wide SIMMS, you can plug in as much memory as you can afford.

There is no "MEGA Expansion Slot" inside the STE, but it is said that the hardware will allow use of the JRI GEN-LOCK video system without the circuit modification needed in MEGAs. The standard CART slot remains, and all scanners, emulators, and video digitizer carts tested worked properly.

Also not available in the STE is a direct method of "overscan" picture display. This is the ability to have picture elements reaching the edges or the screen and beyond, as we are used to on television sets. This may be the single largest complaint of those who hoped an "enhanced" ST would provide a more competitive answer to the Amiga for video and desktop presentation applications. (Through software "tricks", some programs are able to place graphics in the edge "dead zones", but these generally eliminate compatibility with external video standards.)

Minor bug reports are abounding in Canada and overseas. Many stem from the fact that a proper CONTROL.ACC control panel is not yet available. Using the old ST file only allows addressing the normal 512 color selection. Worse, each time you call the panel, ALL of your colors darken by a single intensity value! Another bug makes the STE boot into LOW resolution regardless of directions from a valid DESKTOP.INF that tell it to start in MEDIUM. However, the problems are being addressed by Atari and developers. The very few programs (including the popular POPULUS game) that conflict with the new TOS will almost

certainly be adjusted quickly. Expect things to be pretty well settled by the time you can buy the STE in the USA.

Software that supports the new features of the STE are few and far between so far. A few demos and a single game from Atari show great scrolling, fab music, and stunning graphics. "WHITE WATER MADNESS" looks and sounds wonderful while otherwise being a rather average game. Some developers may be reluctant to program screens for yet another palette and sound system, since compatibility with the existing ST user base is critical. But, just as

many fine games feature both internal and MIDI sound outputs, the better programs of the future will include support for both 512 and 4,096 color selections and digital sound.

In short, the STE is indeed "enhanced". It is a clear evolution in the development of the ST series, without the sting of a higher price.

Z*Net thanks ATARI CANADA, ATARI USA, Darek Mihocka, and ST-World-UK for supplying some of the information and illustrations in this article. ●

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FEBRUARY REVOLUTIONARY CALENDAR

(Editors Note: The following is reprinted ctsy of Artisan Software. This is the schedule of events for February 1990 written by Donald Thomas. If you are interested in more information on THE REVOLUTION write: PO Box 849, Manteca, CA 95336.)

WEEK 6 - February 4 through February 10, 1990

NATIONAL GOODWILL WEEK

In honor of Valentine's Day on February 14, call your local Hospital and ask for the name of a child who may benefit from a little recognition and attention. Design a large outline of a heart on a paint program. Print it out and write: "On behalf of 'The REVOLUTION'; a national Atari computer user interest group, I wish you a speedy recovery. We admire your strength!" Sign and send it to the address the Hospital gives you. You may make the "card" as fancy as you wish, but artistic skills are not required. Parents, have your children pass out Atari generated Valentine's to classmates.

WEEK 7 - February 11 through February 17, 1990

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S WEEK

In honor of President's Day, let's wish Mr. George Bush a pleasant one. To insure the publicity value, send your wishes to have a "REVOLUTIONARY PRESIDENT'S DAY" to the President in care of: CBS TV, 51 West 52nd Street, New York, NY 10019 Send a cover letter to the network asking them to wish the President well in our behalf over the air. Mention our cause in your letter.

WEEK 8 - February 18 through February 24, 1990

NATIONAL USER GROUP RECOGNITION WEEK

If you do not belong to a user group, find one in your area and join. If you already belong, make it a project to ask a minimum of one friend to be your guest to the next meeting. It's preferred that your invited friend does not own an Atari computer. This will be an opportunity to share information on why they may wish to consider one.

Call your local newspaper and ask for the local news desk. Ask them to print announcements of meetings for your local group on a regular basis.

WEEK 9 - February 25 through March 3, 1990

NATIONAL CAR WASH WEEK

Get with your local users' group and organize a benefit car wash to raise money to buy an Atari computer for the school. Set a goal of one 520ST and go from there. Groups exclusively centered around 8-bit can set a goal of one XE system. Contact the school in advance for their permission and to help organize the event. Most local gas stations will donate space and even water access to do this since you will be attracting customers for them. Volunteer to help the school to set the system up. Make certain your local dealer participates and invite him to hand out flyers during the event. Put up Atari posters at the site. Also make certain to use "The REVOLUTION's" namesake for the event.

Write to Atari and ask them to send you a window sticker for your car. They were available and, if not, they will just have to print more. Request one for each car you own. ●

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For Ages 5-11:

☆ Kidpublisher *Professional*

With this desktop publishing program for young writers, kids can produce booklets, posters, etc. with their own illustrations and text in any one of four built-in font styles.

☆ Kidpainter

Your young artist won't be intimidated by the powerful drawing tools in this kidfriendly paint program. Kids can create and print vivid pictures and designs.

For Ages 3-7:

☆ *Super* Kidkeys

Kids sing along as the computer plays 38 familiar songs, or play the keyboard and listen as the computer plays back their composition!

☆ *Super* Kidgrid

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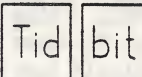
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8-Bit Public Domain and Shareware Survey

by Sally Nagy

Here's the latest and the best of recently circulated 8-bit Atari public domain and Shareware programs. They are typically available on GENie, CompuServe, and most good club disk libraries. Whoever says the 8-bit is dead hasn't been checking the steady flow of quality PD and Shareware releases for our Atari's!

ZYBEX.DCM: Rocketmen steal weapons from deadly foes. Don't be swamped by the mosquito-thick swarm of phantom jets. Avoid the force-field emitting from segmented, sidwinding worms trying to wave you to a final good-bye with their dance of death. Bright music grasps you at the opening screens and peppers the action with that, "just right" extra pizzazz. Select either a 1 or 2 player game. The joystick moves your man up, down and forwards. The trigger button selects a different weapon from the arsenal collected once an enemy's cluster is destroyed. The game is programmed by Brian Jobling, with graphics and design by Michael Owens, music and FX by Adam Gilmore. This trio's collaboration is one well devised game. The GENie uploader didn't do Zybex justice by describing it only as a scramble/cobra genre. It is almost too good to be Public Domain...

TETRIS.ARC: An excellent Russian remake of Tetris written by Darryl Yong in ACTION! Mark McCracken wrote the documentation with hints and tips for playing. One hint for winning at Tetrix is practice, practice, practice. To play, one rotates falling shape blocks to fit in a pit using either the joystick or keyboard. A small view screen on the right alerts you to which shape will be falling next. This aids in planning the stacking of blocks. If you enter into any of the other nine levels from the opening menu, you will be in a 'practice' mode because you can not advance levels. Pause the game for that much needed break to plan your gaming strategy. An option is also available for speeding up the falling blocks. This game is a shareware offering with no specified amount. Donations to: Darryl Yong, 1970 Benita Drive, #1, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

ESCAN.BAS: Easy Scan II Demo Player displays and prints 62 sector picture files. Use pause to study a particular picture longer. Graphic modes 8, 9, 10, 11 and 15 are supported. ESCAN.BAS is written Atari Basic with Machine Language subroutines. Other 62 sector picture files besides those created by the Easy Scanner can be viewed with the program also. Innovative Concepts has uploaded several pic files created using the scanner. Pictures can be found of Superman, Elvis, the Seven Dwarfs from Snow White, Spock, Ghost Busters, DC Comics superfriends, Dennis the Menace, Reagan and more.

FORMULAM.ARC: Formula Master by Marc LeBeau provides you with the most commonly used formula calculations. Convert between Celsius, Fahrenheit and Kelvin temperatures. Determine areas of circles, parallelograms, rectangles, and trapezoids. Quickly calculate volumes of cubes, cones, cylinders, pyramids, rectangles and spheres. Determine slopes of straight lines, figure out the distance between points. The pythagorean theorem calculates the length of the hypotenuse of a right triangle. The quadratic formula allows you to determine the value of x if in the form $Ax^2 + Bx + C = 0$. The program is menu driven. Just select the first letter of the choice and then insert the numbers as they are requested to finish the formulas. A must for those who use these types of formulas everyday.

CRABNEBU.ARC: In Crab Nebula, your mission is to destroy the endless supply of giant crabs. Create a path through four moving walls. Please note that the round portions of these walls are indestructible. Dodge your rebounding shots as well as the tracking missiles ejected by the crabs by maneuvering your small spaceship. If fire on these missiles, you must avoid their falling debris. Beware once the crab is destroyed, it reappears where he was killed and will fire a missile at you. Action moves faster as you enter the nine different levels of play. Spacing between round portions of wall become smaller. Walls and crabs really move. Crab Nebula is shareware. Jeffrey asks that people send him a letter and check to encourage him to continue developing more Atari 8-bit software. Jeffrey D. Potter, 814 Banbury Dr., Port Orange, FL 32119.

CLOWN.OBJ: Crazy Clown Jumper by Brad Timmins tests coordination skills. Leap the clown from balloon to balloon across the chasm and back again to finish level 1. Balloons are released in irregular patterns. Catch the drifting \$s for extra points. If you miss landing on a balloon, the clown falls to the bottom of the screen. In subsequent levels the platforms you jump onto change locations: one raises and other one goes lower, and balloons float faster.

SNAPSHOT.ARC Version 1: This utility program juggles or switches Atari 130 XEs, XLs or XEs with 256K, and those using the Rambo Ram upgrade from ICD memory into two virtual computer systems in the computer at one time. By pressing shift control 1, 8 bit users can switch between two different applications in seconds. Now that extra memory can be put to work in new ways. In the documentation, it was suggested that BBS operators might find this program particularly useful. Instead of taking down the BBS each time to use a word processor, they can set up SnapShot and switch between them at will. It was emphasized that users are using SnapShot at their own RISK for it has been tested with only a NARROW range of hardware and software. The author requests that users send comments, bug reports and suggestions to further its development. The switcher is fully compatible with MYDOS 4.5, Atari DOS 2.5 and Sparta DOS 3.2. It's author, Tom Hunt, has tested it with Infocom's games Cutthroats and Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. It works with TextPro, Atari Basic BUT not with Turbo Basic. If the particular application does not lend itself to working with programmed key combination used to switch between the different applications, Tom provides the disassembly hardware value of the invoking key strokes so another key or key combinations can be used instead. Snapshot is shareware for \$1.00 (or if feeling generous send more). The author also requests you let him know what software and hardware you are using with it. Send shareware monies and comments to: Tom Hunt, 1704 Twp. Rd. 65, Jeromesville, OH 44840. ●

Call the Z*Net BBS
201-968-8148

Alice's ST Stack

by Alice Amore with Mark Quinn

So far this year we have a BIG stack 'o new shareware/PD files and upgrades, so here are the highlights in brief:

90CALNDR.LZH An elaborate "1990 Family Calendar" with built-in holidays, and room for your own notations. Makes nice personal calendars. Requires Timeworks Desktop Publisher ST using landscape format.

CLDEMO1.ARC Demo version of Cleanup ST from ICD, a program which checks the integrity of your disk structure (hard or floppy). This demo will not modify the target disk.

COWORKER.LZH A simple terminal program with a built-in split screen feature for better online conferencing. Includes VT-52, concurrent type/receive, 50K text buffer. Can be run from within Flash! or InterLink.

MATH.ARC "Simply Math" lets you design your own math tests using your own math examples. A set of children's math problems is included. Since there is no limit on the complexity of the math, all ages can use this program. Color/mono.

STARSTRK.ARC "Star-Struck" is the better screen-saver. It fades to black, then gives you an expanding field of stars until your next keypress or mouse-move. It will kick in after 3 minutes of non-activity, but can also be enabled from the desktop or from within any GEM program.

CHANGER.ARC Find and edit text strings in any file including executable code or other binary files. Includes search/replace and import/export.

ATAWORDS.ARC A text file containing 439 words which occur with some frequency when writing Atari articles and documentation. These words are not found in the WordWriter dictionary. The word list can be imported to most word processor dictionaries, or loaded in as a supplemental ("personal") word list. Courtesy of Z*NET.

ALSIDE21.ARC Excellent viewer program for NEOchrome and D.E.G.A.S. pictures in any resolution. 70 variable fade-outs can be placed between pictures, and background music is available. Four pictures included.

BATTLE.LZH - DEMON-SK.LZH - DEMON-TL.LZH - DEMON-WR.LZH - DRAGONS.ARC - DRAGWAR.LZH - MONSTERS.ARC Thanks to GEnie's Darlah for this varied collection of monsters, ghoulies, grotesque reptilian creatures, and freaky warriors from hades. Some of these .IMG files are quite large, but if your printer can handle them, you'll have something interesting for decorating your cave.

UPGRADES!

ARC602ST.ARC This upgrade is completely compatible with the PC version of ARC, and can create directories automatically. Speed has been increased 175% over the previous version.

ARCSSL21.ARC Newest version of ARC SHELL, a program which makes simple work of deARCing just about anything. Covers all popular ARChiving formats. New features/improvements are bountiful.

BSTAT235.LZH A sophisticated graphing and statistical analysis program in interpreted GFA BASIC. Speedy.

CHEETAH2.ARC A fast file-copying utility which can transfer up to 15 megs a minute. Many new wrinkles and fixes.

CPOKER.LZH Version 2.5 of DRAW POKER/DOUBLE DOWN, a colorful poker game with excellent graphics. Runs in mono, too.

DIARY17S.ARC A stripped-down version of DIARY (ver.

1.7), this is a text editor in a desk accessory and takes up only 38K of RAM. Written in Modula-2.

LGSEL-16.ARC Version 1.6 of the mind-blowing LITTLE GREEN SELECTOR, which totally replaces the GEM item selector, and gives you doo-dads that previously were only in your dreams.

PERUSER3.LZH PERUSER is a text file reader with the ability to search for strings, embed picture files, and, now, to integrate music files into text files. This is version 1.03.

PICMAN-2.LZH PICMAN works with Charles F Johnson's DESK MANAGER to allow the display of any Spectrum picture file during boot-up. This upgrade allows up to 50 picture files to be rotated.

RELTREE2.ARC Version 2.04 of Tree Chart, a database of statistics on family members capable of going back thirty-five generations. This version offers improved print-outs and GEDCOM output.

STVI381.LZH Here's the latest ST version of the UNIX VI text editor. Also supports UNIX, Minix (ST), MS/DOS, and OS/2.

SUPRBT60.ARC Multi-featured program which allows a multitude of configurables at boot-up time, this is version 6.0 of SUPER BOOT, and contains lots of new features.

THE-VCR.LZH This is version 2.0 of VCR ORGANIZER, a database devoted exclusively to organizing and printing lists of your videotape collection. GEM-based.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

GRANPRX2.LZH In this "Gran Prix" you race against the clock, trying to beat your best time. Uses joystick. Written in STOS BASIC.

TREK1.LZH Fantastic animation of the original starship Enterprise warping through interstellar space. Done with Cyber Sculpt.

DEEPSPC.LZH An animation of a Jupiter-like planet, and its ring and moons. Highly recommended.

SPINDEMO.LZH Beautiful demo of twisting text and a spinning globe. YOU control the video (to a certain degree).

WORD4.ARC Converts Word Perfect 5.0 files to Atari Word Perfect 4.1 format. Point and click.

AREACODE.LZH Type in any three-digit American or Canadian area code, and this little program will tell you the state or province.

GEMTOUCH.ARC Convert (or "touch") files to different time/date stamps, then sort them by date, arranging your directories to suit your needs.

MULTIPNT.ARC MultiPaint, from the April 1989 issue of ST-LOG. See that issue for documentation. Looks great.

DCSHOWIT.ARC A replacement for the "show" command for viewing text files. Runs from the AUTO folder. Also views uncompressed D.E.G.A.S. and NEOchrome pictures. From Double Click software!

QST18DEM.ARC A demo of "Quick ST" version 1.8, a software screen accelerator from Branch Always software.

SI-RAM.ARC Update of a very nice RAM disk and printer spooler from ST-INFORMER.

MUSINV32.LZH A nice looking program that will keep track of your music collection. An updated version.

[These files are readily available on GEnie, CompuServe, or both, as well as better BBS's everywhere. The Z*Net BBS tries to keep all reviewed programs available online... 201-968-8148.] ●



ST BOMB SQUAD:



74LS373 Chip Replacement



ST and particularly MEGA 2 owners can easily fix a widespread problem that causes random crashes. A pair of driver chips with the number 74LS373 (near the memory chips) are often to blame, performing below the necessary levels. Behavior to look for includes bombs on warm up (about the same length of time each use), indiscriminate bombs (regardless of program or operation in progress), and bombs when using a cart. Particular loading effects when using SPECTRE or GCR carts seem to really point the problem out. Users who had stable machines but recently added TOS 1.4 may also experience the problems. Diagnosis procedures can NOT typically locate this problem.

Repair is simple but does require complete disassembly of your computer, plus some soldering. If this scares you, take this article and your computer to a braver soul who you can trust. Repair shops will do it for you for \$35-\$50. Replace the 74LS373's with 74AS373 chips if you can find them, although almost all LS models will do better than what you are replacing. In fact, it is quite acceptable in this case to simply piggy-back the new chips on top of the old ones, attaching all legs. A cleaner operation would be to clip the

legs of the existing 373's, desolder and remove each pin, and install sockets. Total parts costs will be well under \$5 for two chips and two sockets.

This information comes to use from several sources including David Small of Gadgets by Small, maker of the GCR and Spectre MAC cartridges. Jim Allen, Jr. of FAST Technologies adds that a FEW BLITTER chips can produce the exact same symptoms, including accelerated bombing under load of carts. Crashes are more likely during significant screen operations, however. The "weak" blitter chip says "ATARI" on it while the better chip is a National Semiconductor "NS" chip. The best test is swapping chips.

A Z*Net reader reminds us that all this DOES INDEED void your warranty if done within 90 days of your purchase. Better to TEST YOUR MACHINE thoroughly during your warranty period to be sure all is well, and get it fixed by Atari if not! Borrow carts from fellow club members for extended hours of tests if you have none of your own. Also, run intensive self-running programs (like slideshows or changing graphic displays) overnight a few times to see that your machine does not quit when warm. ●



"ICD sells a superb, excellent, wonderful tape backup unit. I love mine, and it's saved me any number of times.. There's nothing else like this in the ST world; priceless and fast."

-Dave Small, Gadgets by Small

"Using the ICD Tape Backup was surprisingly simple and faster than imaginable. It was so fast that I doubted it was real."

-John Nagy, reviewer for Computer Shopper

"The ICD FA•ST Tape system is a dream come true. The hardware works flawlessly, and the software is incredibly flexible and easy to use...it's simply the best way to back up your hard drive."

-Charles F. Johnson, Codehead Software

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Using the Xformer Software (available separately from Darek Mihocka), this cable lets you plug an 8-bit disk drive or printer into the ST or Mega! **\$19.95**

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